

NUMBERS & BASIC ORDINALS

by Seda Sürel

INTRODUCTION

Numbers are essential in everyday Turkish. They appear in prices, time expressions, dates, quantities, addresses, and descriptions. Turkish numbers follow a simple and fully regular system, making them easy to learn and expand.

1. Cardinal Numbers (Temel Sayılar)

Cardinal numbers indicate how many of something there are. Turkish uses a consistent decimal-based structure.

0–10

- sıfır (zero)
- bir (one)
- iki (two)
- üç (three)
- dört (four)
- beş (five)
- altı (six)
- yedi (seven)
- sekiz (eight)
- dokuz (nine)
- on (ten)

11–19

Formed as on + unit:

- on bir (11)
- on iki (12)
- on üç (13)
- on dört (14)
- on beş (15)
- on altı (16)
- on yedi (17)
- on sekiz (18)
- on dokuz (19)

Tens

- yirmi (20)
- otuz (30)
- kırk (40)
- elli (50)
- altmış (60)
- yetmiş (70)
- seksen (80)
- doksan (90)

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20–99 pattern

Tens + unit:

- yirmi bir (21)
- otuz dört (34)
- kırk dokuz (49)
- yetmiş sekiz (78)

Hundreds and thousands

- yüz (100)
- iki yüz (200)
- üç yüz (300)
- bin (1000)
- iki bin (2000)

All numbers follow a predictable pattern with no irregular forms.

2. Numbers in Sentences

When a number comes before a noun, the noun stays singular in Turkish.

Examples:

- iki kitap (two books)
- beş öğrenci (five students)
- on elma (ten apples)
- dört kedi (four cats)

This rule applies to all nouns.

3. Ordinal Numbers (Sıra Sayıları)

Ordinal numbers indicate order or ranking: first, second, third, etc. They are formed with the suffix **-(l)nci**, adapted through vowel harmony and consonant harmony.

Basic forms

- birinci (first)
- ikinci (second)
- üçüncü (third)
- dördüncü (fourth)
- beşinci (fifth)
- altıncı (sixth)
- yedinci (seventh)
- sekizinci (eighth)
- dokuzuncu (ninth)
- onuncu (tenth)

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Larger ordinals

Add the suffix to the full number:

- yirmi birinci (21st)
- otuz üçüncü (33rd)
- kırk beşinci (45th)
- yüzüncü (100th)

The suffix always appears at the end of the entire number.

4. Numbers Used in Everyday Expressions

Age

- Ben yirmi dokuz yaşımdayım. (I am 29.)
- O on yaşında. (He/She is 10.)

Time

- Saat üç. (It is three o'clock.)
- Saat sekiz buçuk. (It is 8:30.)

Prices

- On lira. (10 lira)
- Yirmi beş lira. (25 lira)

Addresses

- On ikinci kat. (12th floor)
- Beş numara. (Number 5)

5. Common Mistakes to Avoid

Numbers are never pluralized

- ❌ iki kitaplar
- ✓ iki kitap

Ordinal suffix attaches to the entire number, not to each part

- ❌ yirmi birinci → yirmi + birinci (wrong structure)
- ✓ yirmi birinci (correct single unit)

When reading compound numbers, stress remains on the last word

- yirmi beş, yetmiş iki

Examples

- Üç öğrenci sınıfta. (Three students are in the classroom.)
- Onuncu sayfayı açın. (Open the tenth page.)
- Beş elma istiyorum. (I want five apples.)
- Saat dörtte buluşuyoruz. (We are meeting at four.)
- Birinci soru kolay. (The first question is easy.)

Notes

- Cardinal numbers are regular and predictable.
- Ordinal numbers use the suffix -(l)ncı, adapted by vowel harmony.
- Nouns remain singular after numbers.
- Numbers appear frequently in time, dates, age, money, and daily communication.